

vemod

By

Jessica Montgomery

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Visual Art and the Graduate Faculty of the
University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Chairperson Matt Burke

Ruth Bowman

Gina Westergard

Date Defended: March 26, 2014

The Thesis Committee for Jessica Montgomery
certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

vemod

Chairperson Matt Burke

Date approved: April 21, 2014

Abstract:

Portraits of time, space, and psyche; wrought with history, each structure merges psychological manifestations with architectural environments. *vemod was* approached as a reflection of the past and presented as a memorial to what was before. Each structure is a tactile representation, meant to create a visceral experience that ties the viewer to them by tapping into their empathetic bonds. The following is a written thesis of the concepts and visual aspects of Jessie Montgomery's Master of Fine Art, thesis exhibition. The work was installed in the Art and Design Gallery at the University of Kansas.

Table of Contents:

Introduction.....	1
Context.....	2
Process.....	4
Material.....	5
Installation.....	8
Conclusion.....	9

Introduction:

This work serves as a culmination of an experience; to memorialize a time of personal struggle and emotional transformation. After emerging out a period of introspective evaluation I realized the importance of honoring my own internalized struggle with psychological forces. In order to move on from what felt like an overwhelming pile of wreckage it became imperative to memorialize it. This is my way of paying respect to the past. I entered into this project with a list of affirmations to hold on to. Among them was the need to be as bare and honest as possible. I focused on the aspects of my art that I have truly valued most and selfishly choose to serve them. Combining the contextual needs and practical values that make up the core of my work; the most significant execution in *vemod* is the accentuation of tactile surface.



Full View

Context:

vemod exists, almost entirely, in history. Though the physical structures are in the present, they are born out of the history of the artist and history of the process. They are the artifacts; a memorial. Every moment spent in physical dialogue leaves a mark. The pull of the fabric, the gesture of a hand and every drip of paint leaves a print. Some of them are ghostly and barely defined but each one is imperative to the whole. The final result is one that shows that growth; birth, life, death, decay. The remains speak to the passage of time. *vemod* feels like each structure is a cut out of a moment. They inhabit the physical space of that moment with references to architectural structures and building materials. Allusions to the human body tie the structures to the viewers. Each structure is initially identical and any changes among them were brought on through process. This evokes a passing of time. It's obvious that the structures have gone through some sort of transformation. They relate to the body in size; each one boxing out the space that one individual would occupy, if they were standing inside them. Many of them could be engaged in this manner should someone choose to stand within the confines of the armature. The implication is meant to engage the viewer physically and allow them to approach the piece as an equal.



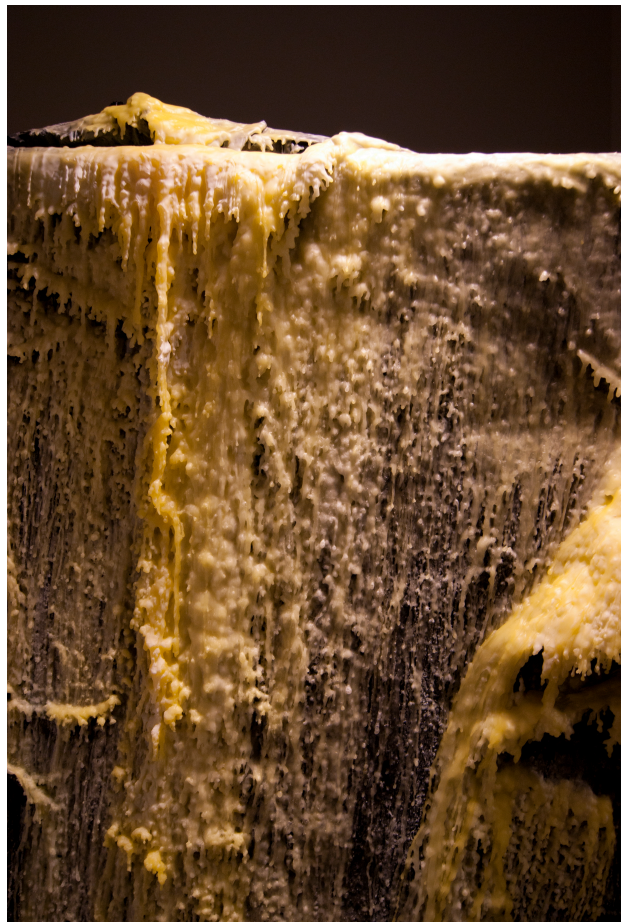
Inside Circle 1



Inside Circle 2

Process:

I interact with my world in a very tactile manner. I explore through touch. I feel rather than just look. It is vital to me that the viewer has the ability to do that when engaging in the experience of *vemod*. None of that can be achieved without my dedication to process. Every hour spent working is as important as the physical, completed object. The art is the way the thread pulls through the layers of fabric and paint. The physical and emotional demand of process oriented work leads to a finished representation of everything consciously and subconsciously mulled over during that devoted time. Loose and meditative thoughts generate gestures that have a relaxed notion to them. You can read the tension in the handling of materials that were driven by chaotic thoughts. These structures contain impressions of those moments.



Detail 1

Material:

I work in an intuitive manner and approach my materials in the same way. Experimentation is vital. Availability has always played a part in my material choices as well. I've been hardwired throughout my life to make do with what exists at hand. It's given me a great amount of respect for the affordable, easily obtained and mundane. That reverence is at the core of most of the materials used in *vemod*. The choice of materials is a way to create an intrinsic environment. They are what make the structural spaces indicative of the physical environment.

Wheat paste is present in multiple locations within the work. Basic wheat flour and water, mixed in room temperature water creates a dull and brittle paste that can be mixed to varied consistencies. Thin it down and it drips and runs. Once dried it flakes delicately, almost like dried layers of flesh that have gone inelastic and nearly transparent. Mix to a thicker consistency and it hardens to dense calcium-like state. The wheat paste acts as a substance that reminiscent of body but also it closely resembles crumbled surfaces of a building.

Sheet plastic is the primary component covering one of the structures. The decision to feature this material came from the desire to create a visual weight that was layered. I wanted the layers to be light, as well as having a density. I was inspired by the idea of cobwebs overwhelming an object. I wanted to project an overall sense of choking and engulfing using a transparent element. Melting the layers of plastic evokes a bodily reference that relates to the stretching of tendons. It also provides an encroaching atmospheric element.

Fabric is used as a base for all surfaces in *vemod*. It is stretched across the armature. It is wrapped and layered amongst other materials. This allows for a surface that fluctuates and

moves with the material and with the armature. It also affords an opportunity to pull at the surface to create tension, where as a hard material would be more static. I additionally wanted to keep the structures light. This was both a practical decision and atmospheric one. The use of fabric allows the structure to frame space, where as something denser seems to sit in space.



Detail 2



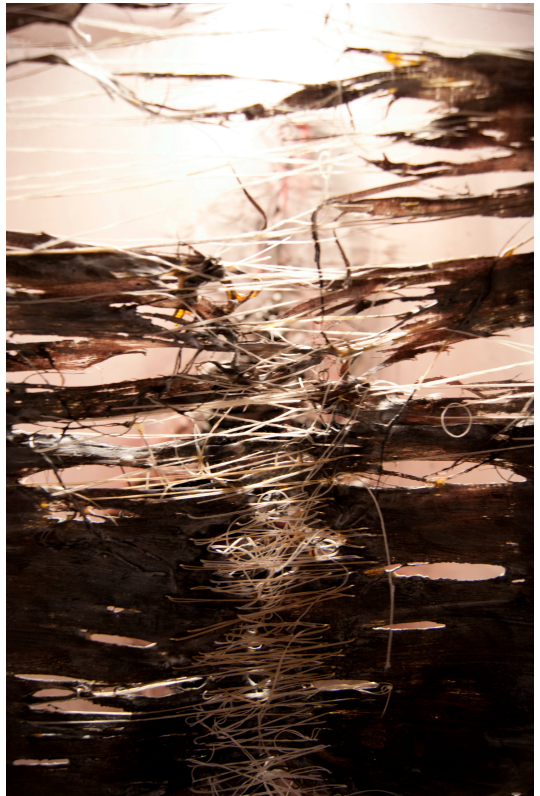
Detail 4



Detail 3



Detail 5



Detail 6

Installation:

The seven structures in *vemod* are arranged in a circle. Each one is given its equal amount of space and there is no distinctive hierarchy within their placement in the circle. They are seen as glimpses and dedications to moments. No one is more important than another. It's important for the viewer to not only take in the collective but to also have the ability to connect with each structure individually. This is why each one stands, evenly, in its own space and within a singular light source, dedicated specifically to that structure. They are spaced far enough apart to allow a rest in light. As a result an encompassing darkness surrounds each structure's personal space. It's important that the viewer have the ability to have a moment with each individual structure and what it embodies.



Partial 1



Partial 2

Conclusion:

There is intrinsic beauty in just existing. There are moments which are flawed and jagged, that just barely hold together. There glimpses of sumptuous beauty within very basic parameters. I entered into the creation of *vemod* wanting to capture the essence of something. In a way I was providing solace to myself. I didn't always know what it was I was processing through the creation of this work. I just knew that whatever came out the other end was going to be the memorialized remains of a period of time. They are a dedication to a time that has passed; a time where existing was the hardest battle to be won.